

TCS - 3rd Draft
10/21/62

Good evening, my fellow citizens:

This Government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military build-up on the island of Cuba. Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive nuclear missile sites is now in preparation on that unhappy island. Until less than a week ago, reliable information of this nature had been received -- but, having now completed its evaluation and our determination upon a course of action, this Government feels obliged to report this new crisis to you in full detail.

Four and possibly five of these sites, containing a total of 16 missiles, are Medium Range Ballistic Missile sites, with two missiles to be located on each launcher. Each of these 32 missiles would be capable of carrying a nuclear warhead for a distance of more than 1000 nautical miles. Each of these 32 missiles, in short, is capable of striking Washington, D.C., the Panama Canal, Cape Canaveral, Mexico City, or any other city in the Southeastern United States, in Central America or in the Caribbean area.

Two additional sites not yet completed appear to be designed for Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles -- capable of travelling more than twice as far and thus capable of striking almost any city in the Western Hemisphere, ranging as far north as Hudson's Bay, Canada and as far south as Lima, Peru. In addition, medium range jet bombers, capable of

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Four and possibly five of these sites, containing 4 launchers each, are Medium Range Ballistic Missile sites, with two missiles to be loaded on each launcher. Each of these 32 missiles would be capable of carrying a nuclear warhead for a distance of more than 1000 nautical miles. Each of these 32 missiles, in short, is capable of striking Washington, D.C., the Panama Canal, Cape Canaveral, Mexico City, or any other city in the Southeastern part of the United States, in Central America or in the Caribbean areas.

Two additional sites not yet completed appear to be designed for sixteen Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles - capable of travelling more than twice as far and thus capable of striking almost any city in the Western Hemisphere, ranging as far north as Hudson's Bay, Canada and as far south as Lima, Peru. In addition, medium range jet bombers, capable of

carrying nuclear weapons, are now being uncrated on Cuba, while appropriate air bases are being prepared.

This urgent transformation of Cuba into an important strategic base -- by the presence of these large, long-range and clearly offensive weapons of sudden destruction -- constitutes an open threat to the peace and security of all the Americas, in naked and deliberate defiance of the Rio Pact of 1947, the traditions of this nation and Hemisphere, the Joint Resolution of the 87th Congress, the Charter of the United Nations, and my own public warnings to the Soviets on September 4 and 13. This action also contradicts the repeated assurances of Soviet spokesmen, both publicly and privately delivered, that the arms build-up in Cuba would retain its original defensive character, and that Soviet missiles would never be stationed on the territory of any other nation.

The size of this undertaking makes clear that it had been planned some months ago. Yet only last month, after I had made clear the distinction between any introduction of ground-to-ground missiles and defensive anti-aircraft missiles, the Soviet Government publicly stated that "the armaments and military equipment sent to Cuba are designed exclusively for defensive purposes", that "there is no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons . . . for a retaliatory blow to any other country, for instance Cuba", and that "the Soviet Union has so powerful rockets to carry these nuclear warheads that there is no need to search for sites for them beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union." That statement was

patently false and misleading.

Only last Thursday, as this rapid offensive build-up continued, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko told me in my office that he was instructed to make it clear once again, as he said the Soviet Government had already done, that Soviet assistance to Cuba "pursued solely the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba", that "training by Soviet specialists of Cuban nationals in handling defensive armaments was by no means offensive", and that "if it were otherwise, the Soviet Government would have never become involved in rendering such assistance." That statement also was dishonest and dishonorable.

Neither the United States of America nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. We no longer live in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation's security to constitute an "armed attack" under Article 51 of the UN Charter. Nuclear weapons are so destructive, and ballistic missiles are so swift, that any substantially increased possibility of their use or any sudden change in the nature of their threat may well require an act of self-defense.

For many years, both the Soviet Union and the United States -- recognizing this fact -- have deployed nuclear weapons with great care, never upsetting the precarious status quo which ensured that these weapons would not be used in the absence of some vital challenge. Our own weapons systems have never been secretly transferred to the territory

of any other nation; and our history -- unlike that of the Soviets since World War II -- demonstrates that we have no desire to dominate or conquer any other nation or impose our system upon its people. Nevertheless, American citizens have become adjusted to living daily on the bull's eye of Soviet missiles located inside the USSR or in submarines.

In that sense, missiles in Cuba simply add to an already clear and present danger -- although, it should be noted, the nations of Latin America have never previously been included as communist nuclear targets.

But this secret, swift and extraordinary build-up of communist missiles in an area well-known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States and the nations of the Western Hemisphere -- in violation of Soviet assurances, in suddenly stationing strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil, in defiance of American and Hemispheric policy -- is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country, if our courage and our commitments are ever to be believed again by either friend or foe.

The 1930's taught us a clear lesson: aggressive conduct, if allowed to grow unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war.

This nation is opposed to war. We are also true to our word. Our unswerving objective, therefore, must be to take whatever steps are necessary to prevent the use of these missiles against this or any other country, and to secure their withdrawal or elimination from the Western Hemisphere. I am so informing Soviet Chairman Khrushchev and

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President Dorticos of Cuba by separate messages already dispatched.

Our policy has been one of patience and restraint, as befits a peaceful and powerful nation. We had no wish to be diverted from our central efforts by mere irritants and fanatics. But further action is now required and underway; and these actions may only be the beginning.

We will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of world-wide nuclear war in which even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our hands -- but neither will we shrink from that risk at any time it must be faced.

Acting, therefore, in the defense of our own security and that of the entire Western Hemisphere, and under the authority entrusted to me by the Constitution as endorsed by the Resolution of the Congress, I have directed that the following initial steps be taken immediately:

- 1) First: to halt this offensive build-up, there is to be initiated a blockade on all military equipment under shipment to Cuba. Such a blockade can clearly be authorized both by the requirements of U. S. self-defense and by the Organ of Consultation of the Organization of American States, acting under Articles 6 and 8 of the Rio Treaty and this year's Punta del Este Resolution. All ships bound for Cuba, from whatever nation or port, will, if found to contain cargoes of weapons, be turned back. Such a blockade will be extended, if needed, to other types of cargo and carriers. In short, it will not only prevent completion

of the current offensive build-up on Cuba. It will also require the Soviet Union to choose between fighting the U. S. Navy in American waters or abandoning its build-up on Cuba. And it will require Cuba to choose between pursuing the interests of her own people or subjecting them to great dangers in the interests of a distant power.

2) Second: I have directed the continued and increased close surveillance of Cuba and its military build-up. The Foreign Ministers of the OAS in their communique of October 6 rejected secrecy on such matters in this Hemisphere. Should offensive military preparations continue, thus increasing the threat to the Hemisphere, appropriate action will be undertaken at a time and in a manner of our own determination.

I have directed the armed forces to prepare for such eventualities, including the targeting of these bases by our strategic forces; and I trust that both the Cuban people and the Soviet technicians at these sites will recognize in time our inability to tolerate this threat.

3) Third: It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.

4) Fourth: We shall urge the UN and the OAS to demand removal of these offensive weapons, and the prompt dispatch of an international inspection team to make certain that this is done.

5) Fifth: As a necessary military precaution, I have reinforced

our base at Guantanamo, evacuated the dependents of our personnel there and ordered additional military units to stand by on an alert basis.

6) Sixth: Our allies in both NATO and the OAS have been alerted; the call for the OAS meeting to which I referred has already gone out; our case against this serious threat to peace will be presented, as required by the Charter, to which we subscribe, to an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council; and we shall, in addition, convene immediately a meeting of countries in the Caribbean area to work out cooperative means of halting the clandestine movement of subversive agents and materials between Cuba and Latin America.

7) Seventh: I call upon Chairman Khrushchev to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations. I call upon him further to abandon this course of world domination, and to join with me and others in an historic effort to end the perilous arms race and transform the history of man. By his action last week the world has moved a step closer to the brink of that dark and awful abyss of destruction. It is time for both sides to step back from that brink -- to refrain from any action which will widen or deepen the present crisis -- and to resume the search for peaceful and permanent solutions.

This nation is prepared to present its case against this threat to peace and our own proposals for a peaceful world at any time, in any forum, to any figure -- in the OAS, in the United Nations, and to Chairman Khrushchev

in person. We have in the past made strenuous efforts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. We have proposed the elimination of all arms and overseas bases in a fair and effective disarmament treaty. We are prepared to discuss new proposals for the removal of tensions on both sides -- including the possibilities of a genuinely independent Cuba, free to determine its own destiny. We have only recently supported the announcement by the Iranian Government that it would not permit the establishment of foreign missile bases upon its territory. We have no wish to war with the Soviet Union; for we are a peaceful people who desire to live in peace with all other peoples.

But we cannot settle these problems under threats -- negotiation yes, intimidation never. That is why this latest Soviet threat -- or any other threat which is made either independently or in response to our blockade -- must and will be met with determination. And that is why, should any talks develop, our forces all over the world will be alert -- and the blockade will remain. Any Soviet show of force anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we are committed -- including the brave people of West Berlin -- will be met by whatever action is needed; and we are ready, if tensions are increased over Berlin, to send additional ground and air forces to Europe.

8) Finally, I have directed the United States Information Agency to use all available resources in making clear our position to the captive

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people of Cuba. My words tonight are being carried directly to them -- and I want to tell them this. Do not permit yourselves to become involved in the grim confrontation of nuclear weapons. Do not become the first Latin American country to have these weapons on your soil. Do not become the first Latin American country to be a necessary target for massive destruction. These weapons cannot contribute to the security of Cuba; they can only undermine it. They can contribute nothing to your peace and well being.

This nation has no quarrel with the Cuban people, only sympathy and hope. We know you did not consent to the transformation of your island into a target for nuclear war. We know your lives and land are being used as pawns by those who deny you freedom. We have no wish to cause you to suffer or to impose any system upon you.

Our objective, on the contrary, is to give back to the Cuban people the dream of their own revolution -- the dream of "liberty and justice for all" which Fidel Castro repudiated when he sold you out to the Soviets. Many times in the past, the Cuban people have risen to throw out tyrants -- foreign and domestic -- who destroyed their liberty. And I have no doubt that the vast majority of Cubans today looks forward to the time when they will once again be free -- free to choose their own leaders, free to select their own system, free to own their own land, to speak and write and worship without fear or degradation. And when foreign domination is

ended, and the use of Cuba as a base of subversion and aggression has ceased, we shall gladly welcome her back to the society of free nations and to the associations of this Hemisphere. For the basic objective of the United States in the world today is peace and freedom -- and that includes the peace and freedom of the Cuban people.

* * *

My fellow citizens: let no one doubt that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out. No one can foresee precisely what course it will take or what costs or casualties will be incurred. Many months of sacrifice and self-discipline lie ahead -- months in which both our will and our patience will be tested by those who would have us do more and those who would have us do less. But the path we have chosen for the present is consistent with our character and courage as a nation, and our commitments around the world. The cost of freedom is always high -- but Americans have always paid it. One path we shall never choose -- the path of surrender or submission.

Our goal is not the victory of might but the vindication of right -- not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this Hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved.